



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

News Release

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ADMITTED ARMENIAN HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSER DEPORTED

Former militia member barred from U.S. for involvement in violent combat

SAN DIEGO – U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) today announced the removal of a former lieutenant in the Armenian militia who admitted recruiting soldiers and providing arms to assist in the persecution of the Azeri people. Vigen Patatanyan, 38, a naturalized Armenian citizen born in Iran, departed San Diego early yesterday morning on board a commercial flight.

Patatanyan had been in ICE custody since 2004 following his arrest at the Otay Mesa port of entry when he sought to reenter the United States just six months after being deported to Armenia. At the time, Patatanyan attempted to pose as a refugee by showing U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers a valid refugee travel document belonging to someone else.

During his immigration proceedings, Patatanyan testified that he formerly served as a lieutenant in the Armenian militia and recruited soldiers to fight with him in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. According to Patatanyan, he brought supplies, including AK-47 rifles and ammunition, to soldiers engaged in battles at Getashe, Bertavan, Arstvashen, Susshi, and Stepanasker - conflicts that resulted in the massacre of countless villagers.

“We will not allow this country to serve as a safe haven for those who have committed crimes against humanity,” said ICE San Diego deputy chief counsel Alan Rabinowitz. “ICE is seeking to remove human rights violators of all nationalities who come here to evade prosecution for crimes they have committed in their home countries.”

Patatanyan’s removal is part of ICE’s ongoing effort to identify, apprehend, prosecute, and remove human rights violators. ICE attorneys are currently tracking and litigating more than 900 cases involving human rights violators from more than 85 countries nationwide.

Many of the most egregious human rights violators residing in the United States are living and working among some of their victims who have sought asylum and refugee status in the United States. ICE encourages the public to come forward with any information they may have regarding human rights abusers residing in this country. Tips can be reported at 1-866- DHS-2ICE.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.